

Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers

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NETS Feature

Wake Up! It's National Sleep Awareness Week

Each year, in conjunction with daylight saving time when most Americans set their clocks forward an hour and prepare to lose an hour of sleep, the National Sleep Foundation (NSF) and its partners wake America up to the importance of sleep during National Sleep Awareness Week (NSAW).....more http://www.trafficsafety.org/newsletter/050401_wakefeat.asp

Latest Traffic Safety News

Mobile Communication Devices Potential Liability For Employers

More employers are turning to mobile communication technologies—including cell phones, BlackBerry handhelds, or personal digital assistants—to keep tabs on their employees and boost productivity. However, recent lawsuits have shown that these technologies can have dangerous and costly pitfalls. One of the most common lawsuits occurs when an employee is deemed responsible for a traffic crash because he was using one of the devices and was distracted from the driving task. The employer can be held liable for traffic crashes caused by one of their employees using these devices. According to experts, the best advice for employers is to develop a comprehensive policy that addresses these devices. Read the full article at <http://charlotte.bizjournals.com/charlotte/stories/2005/03/21/focus3.html>

Study Shows Merits Of Training Employees

A new survey of employees conducted by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) found that 94 percent of respondents who had undertaken training in the previous 12 months say it has helped them improve their job performance. The study also revealed that 21 percent of the employees surveyed believe they are not given enough training opportunities.

California Lawmakers Call On DMV To Issue Recall Notices

California lawmakers recently passed legislation that would require the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to include auto safety recall notices in the vehicle registration forms it sends to motorists. Under the provision, auto manufacturers would have to compile a list of recalled vehicles and provide that information to the DMV. The DMV would then be required to relay that notification information to the owners of vehicles on those lists when it sends out registration renewal notices. Currently, manufacturers are required to send their own recall notices to vehicle owners, but critics say these warnings frequently aren't seen or discarded as junk mail. It is estimated that only about 72 percent of recalled vehicles are repaired each year. Read the full article at <http://www.detnews.com/2005/autosinsider/0503/16/autos-119120.htm>

Safety Features For The Raceway And The Roadway

A reporter takes a closer look at the ability of today's racecar drivers to escape fiery crashes without so much as a scratch and finds that safety equipment, not luck, makes all the difference. Safety features built into the track, the car itself, and even racecar drivers' wardrobes are highly engineered to keep them in place, absorb impact forces, and give them precious seconds of fire protection. Most of the equipment is expensive, and some of it must be replaced or officially inspected and re-certified each

year. Now some of the safety features that protect a racecar driver in a crash have found their way into cars we drive on the nation's roadways. Read the full article at <http://www.aftermarketbusiness.com/aftermarketbusiness/article/articleDetail.jsp?id=148826>

Hawaii Law Enforcement Step Up Pedestrian Safety Efforts

A spate of crashes involving pedestrians has police officials in Hawaii hitting the streets to promote pedestrian safety campaigns and legislation. Pedestrian deaths in Oahu spiked last year after plummeting just one year before. There were 24 pedestrians killed in 2004, up from 14 in 2003. According to law enforcement, education and community awareness are the main strategies to preventing injury and death. In response to a number of elderly pedestrian deaths in 2004, the Hawaii Police Department and the state Department of Transportation helped form Walk Wise Kupuna. The program was expanded earlier this year and is now called Walk Wise Hawaii. Police are hopeful that new legislation will also increase pedestrian safety. Under one proposed law, most drivers would be required to come to a full stop whenever a pedestrian enters a crosswalk. Read the full article at <http://the.honoluluadvertiser.com/article/2005/Mar/11/In/In06p.html>

Highway Safety Advocates Defeat 16 Hour Workday Proposal

Thanks to the efforts of highway safety efforts, including Parents Against Tired Truckers, a recent proposal that pushed for a 16-hour workday for truckers was withdrawn. Under the current Hours-of-Service (HOS) regulations, commercial drivers can work 14-hours per day, 11 of which can be on the road.

Two-License Plate Requirement Restored In Ohio

At the urging of law enforcement, the two-license plates requirement for vehicles in Ohio has been restored. The announcement comes as a major victory for the Ohio Highway Patrol, which has fought the one-plate concept for years.

Arrest Warrants Issued After Fleet Fails To Appear For Safety Violation Hearings

One of Hawaii's biggest and best-known refuse companies has been skipping court and avoiding penalties for safety violations, according to a recent investigative news report. The fleet consists of more than 100 trucks, and despite numerous violations in the last two years, the last time an official went to court was 22 months ago. Since then, the company has failed to show at 27 traffic court hearings. Judges have issued 19 penal summons and five arrest warrants, and most are still outstanding. Read the report at <http://www.thehawaiiichannel.com/news/4266586/detail.html>

Is Your Car Vulnerable To A Computer Virus?

That is the question many experts are grappling with. It was rumored that such a virus had infected Lexus cars and SUVs. The virus supposedly entered the cars over the Bluetooth wireless link that allows drivers to use their cell phones to carry on hands-free conversations through the cars' microphone and speakers. Adding to concerns, a handful of cell phone viruses have already been observed. Is this a precursor to what may lie ahead for today's computer-driven cars? Some experts say, yes. As vehicles are increasingly controlled by electronics and more data is being exchanged with outside sources, automotive worms could burrow into a memory storage area in ways that engineers have never imagined.

CDL Holders In Illinois Could Face Suspensions After Fatal Crashes

Proposed legislation in Illinois could suspend the commercial driver's license (CDL) of drivers involved in certain fatal crashes. The proposal calls for a six-month suspension for any commercial driver involved in a fatal wreck. However, if it is determined in a police report or ruled by a court that "a person who died as a result of the crash accident caused the accident," the CDL will not be

suspended. In addition to the suspension provision, the CDL holder will be required to complete 100 hours of community service before the license would be restored.

IIHS Releases New Report On Crash Rates By Vehicle Make, Model

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) recently released "The Risk of Dying in One Vehicle Versus Another," a new status report that compares driver death rates by vehicle, make and model. The report found that the crash rates primarily reflect the influence of a vehicle's design and patterns of use. The survey results put new pressures on Detroit automakers, whose vehicles generally fared poorly. View the full report at <http://www.iihs.org/srpdfs/sr4003.pdf> Read the full article at <http://www.detnews.com/2005/autosinsider/0503/16/D01-118497.htm>

Survey: Visible Road Marking Are Critical Safety Issue Among U.S. Drivers

According to a new survey released by the Higher Highway Safety Standards (HHSS), 99 percent of the surveyed drivers feel that bright and easy-to-see road markings are important to driver safety, and 94 percent believe that state and local municipalities should make easy-to-see road lines a priority. The survey polled drivers between the ages of 18 and 65+ from across the country. All demographic and geographic segments found the importance of bright and easy-to-see lines evident, particularly those drivers who are 50 years and older. Read the release at http://biz.yahoo.com/prnews/050317/phth010_3.html

Mother Pleads Guilty To Drowsy Driving

A Minnesota woman has pleaded guilty to second-degree manslaughter for endangering her child when she fell asleep while driving and crashed into a mini-van, fracturing her daughter's skull. The medical examiner ruled that the one-year old child likely died from the impact of the front-seat airbag releasing during the crash. The girl was found on the car floor under a deflated airbag. Read the full article at <http://www.startribune.com/stories/467/5299459.html>

When Fleets Go Global

Encouraged by the success of other fleets, many large companies are seriously considering introducing international fleet policies. However, experts warn while an international fleet may be part of one's company or brand, operations in each country are likely to be as diverse as the cultures in which they operate. In order to coordinate the logistics of so many organizations and people, many companies outsource the responsibility to a fleet management company large enough to offer international support in different countries. While cost savings is one of the most noted benefits to going global, experts say that it is impossible to organize an international fleet without relying on technology, including computer systems to collate, monitor and control costs.

Illinois Police Departments Drop Class Action Suit Against Ford

Illinois police departments that joined a class action lawsuit against Ford Motor Co. claiming that the company's Crown Victoria Interceptors were unsafe are now dropping out of the suit after the automaker told them that was the only way it would keep selling them cars. According to Ford, about 120 police agencies across the state have dropped out of the lawsuit and dozens more have filed motions to do the same. The Crown Victoria police cars have been at the center of legal battles around the country since 2002, when municipalities started filing lawsuits claiming the vehicles explode too easily in rear-end collisions. At least 15 police officers nationwide have died in rear-end Crown Victoria crashes since 1983. Read the full article at http://www.freep.com/money/autonews/vic22e_20050322.htm

Truckers Driving More Under HOS Rules

According to a new survey conducted by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), truck drivers are spending more time behind the wheel since new U.S. hours-of-service (HOS) rules went into effect in January 2004. The survey revealed that the new rule lengthens the mandatory rest period by two hours, but allows drivers to stay on the road an additional hour every day. Overall, this restart provision increases allowable driving hours in a seven-day period from 60 to 77. A quarter of the drivers surveyed said they drive more than the new daily limit hours, and eight out of 10 drivers said they're taking advantage of the restart provision. Read the full article at <http://www.todaystrucking.com/displayarticle.cfm?ID=3858>

The Perfect Duet: Satellite Radio And Auto Manufacturers Team Up

According to recent reports, satellite radio seems to be gaining momentum with auto manufacturers. Earlier this month Hyundai Motor Co. struck a deal with XM Satellite Radio to make its equipment a standard feature in all the South Korean automaker's models. The partnership prompted a similar deal between competitor Sirius Satellite Radio and Land Rover and Jaguar—both owned by Ford Motor Co. Both deals come amid criticisms that the two satellite radio providers would need major subscriptions deals to stay afloat. Currently there are only 4.4 million satellite radio subscribers combined. Financial experts say that each provider needs about 10 million subscribers to break even. Collaborations with auto manufacturers could help boost satellite radio subscriptions. Read the full article at <http://www.tallahassee.com/mld/tallahassee/business/11215995.htm>

A Frustrating Finish For Photo Supporters In Virginia

Red-light camera proponents in Virginia are expressing their dismay at a recent decision by the state's lawmakers to eliminate red-light cameras at busy traffic intersections beginning July 1. The pilot program was approved in 1995 and placed automatic surveillance cameras above intersections to take photos of vehicles running red lights, charging violators a \$50 fee. The goal of the program was to save lives and prevent injuries. However, officials had a difficult time proving that fatal crashes were prevented due to the cameras. Opponents of the cameras said that the presence of the cameras actually spurred crashes as drivers trying to avoid being photographed stopped too quickly and caused rear-end collisions. Furthermore, many rural Virginia lawmakers contended that the cameras infringed on personal liberties. Read the full article at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A60301-2005Mar23.html>

New Trend: Cars Get Computer-Jacked

Computing power is rising in the car industry, as car designers switch from mechanics to electronics in everything from accelerating and gear-shifting to braking. In the next few years dashboards will get all the functions of a state of the art desktop PC, including LCD panel dashboards and MP3 connectors. The computer-driven car comes as automakers try to make new models safer and easier to drive.

Read the full article at

http://news.com.com/Computers%2Badd%2Bfun,%2Bsafety%2Bto%2Bconcept%2Bcars/2100-1041_3-5637670.html?tag=nefd.lede

Study: Working The Nightshift Affects Driving Performance

Driving in the early morning is associated with increased crash risk, affecting not only professional drivers, but also those who commute to and from work. A new study used a driving simulator to investigate the effects of driving home after completing a night shift. The results showed that driving home from the night shift was associated with an increased number of incidents, and indicate severe post night shift effect on sleepiness and driving performance.

Source: Journal of Sleep Research Authors: T. Akerstedt, B. Peters, A. Anund, G. Kecklund

News from USDOT

More Motorists Than Ever Using Cell Phones While Driving

A new survey released by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) found that more motorists than ever are using cell phones while driving. Among the findings, the survey found that 8 percent of drivers, or 1.2 million people, used hand-held or hands-free cell phones during daylight hours last year, a 50 percent increase since 2002 and a 100 percent increase in four years. For more information visit http://www.usatoday.com/news/bythenumbers/2005-03-02-cell-use-behind-wheel_x.htm and <http://www.detnews.com/2005/autosinsider/0503/02/autos-105380.htm> View the survey results at <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pdf/nrd-30/NCSA/RNotes/2005/809847.pdf>

FHWA, NHTSA Release New Guidelines On Red-Light Cameras

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and NHTSA have released an updated version of its red-light camera operational guide. The new guidelines are designed to foster initiatives to improve intersection safety by reducing red-light running crashes. For more information visit <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/intersections/>

International Traffic Safety News:

Transport Canada To Gather Hard Evidence Against Driver Distractions

According to a study conducted by NHTSA in 2000, driver distraction was considered a contributing factor in 20 to 50 percent of all crashes. Additionally, the Transport Research Laboratory in England stated in a 2002 paper that talking on a cell phone impaired a driver's reaction time significantly more than having a blood alcohol level over the legal limit. However, despite these studies, the fact is that there is a lack of hard evidence when it comes to determining driver distractions. Now, as dashboard technologies are on the rise, Transport Canada is looking for ways to build off of event data recorders (EDRs) and track driver distractions. This new code would regulate dashboard devices, the size and type of display screen, the amount of eye deflection required by the driver to operate them, the amount of time it takes to complete a task on the device and the "glance" time. Read the full article at <http://www.canada.com/ottawa/ottawacitizen/news/driving/story.html?id=5a0443b9-620c-4bd8-8cc5-6752cd637a4a>

New Traffic Monitoring System Expected To Relieve London Traffic

A new partnership between the Transport for London and Trafficmaster—a traffic monitoring system—is expected to drastically relieve area traffic. Trafficmaster relies on a network of thousands of cameras to relay traffic information to drivers via dashboard monitors. Under the merger, a new data exchange system will be developed enabling them to share information to inner and outer London areas through new communication channels including, websites and variable message signs. Read the full article at <http://business.scotsman.com/technology.cfm?id=267682005>

Motorcycle Helmets Now Take Cell Phone Calls

Motorcyclists in the UK will now be able to talk and ride by using a mobile-phone headset fitted for crash helmets. The headsets, which connect to a mobile phone by wire, allow riders to answer the phone while riding. It includes an answer/call button that fits into the exterior of the helmet. Legislation in 2003 made cell phone use while driving a car in the UK illegal. However, it does not outlaw the pressing of buttons on a mobile phone by a motorcyclist so long as they aren't actually holding the phone. Read the article at http://news.com.com/Crash+helmets+take+cell+calls/2100-1039_3-5611337.html?tag=cd.top

Irish Leader Visits Famous Green-On-Top Traffic Light

In the spirit of St. Patrick's Day, Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern stood beneath the nation's only traffic signal that has the green light on top and the red on the bottom. The inverted traffic signal can be found in Syracuse's Tipperary Hill section, a traditionally Irish-American neighborhood. Read the full story at <http://www.wstm.com/global/story.asp?s=3084339&ClientType=Printable>

ERF Presentations Addressing Motorcycle Safety Now Available

The European Union Road Federation (ERF) has posted presentations from its recent workshop on motorcycle safety. The presentations provide an assessment of the current safety risk for motorcyclists, highlight road-engineering research, and examine the safety potential of passive safety devices and road services. For more information visit <http://www.nts.gov/publictn/2005/SR0501.pdf>

Joystick-Controlled Driving For Drivers With Disabilities

The Swedish National Road and Transport Research Institute released a report that examines alternative joystick driving control designs and methods that could be used to evaluate how well the vehicle adaptations compensate for particular disabilities. For more information visit http://62.119.60.67/templates/Report_2797.aspx?reportid=4182

Survey: UK Drivers Unaware Of Road Sign Meanings

A new survey reveals that nearly three in five UK drivers are baffled by road signs. According to the 1,500 responses, 57 percent could not identify road signs correctly. The speeding sign was identified as the sign drivers were most likely to ignore. For more information visit <http://news.scotsman.com/latest.cfm?id=4290776>

British Army Wins Battle Over Fleet Costs

The British Army Training Unit, thanks in large part to its new fleet management system, has been able to streamline its operating costs and save hundreds of thousands of pounds since its introduction in 2001. The fleet of 800 military vehicles, including adapted Land Rovers, high mobility load carriers, and civilian cars and vans, is based out of Cyprus. Using new technology, the British Forces Cyprus fleet can manage virtually everything from license checking to vehicle availability. They are able to view all of their vehicles and assets, and use collected data to make procurement decisions and to specifically track 'cost against activity' key performance indicators. Since the success of the program in Cyprus, the British Armed Forces has rolled out the system at bases in Canada, the Falkland Isles, Ascension Islands, and Gibraltar.

Traffic Safety In South Africa Goes Hi-Tech

In conjunction with its "Arrive Alive" campaign, South Africa's Department of Transport has turned to technology to minimize road crashes this Easter. Traffic police cars will be fitted with video cameras, tracking systems, breathalyzers, and scanners. The scanners will be able to read the barcode on license disks and drivers' licenses and then feed the information to the National Traffic Information System. Patrol cars will be set up to guard 86 of the most hazardous roadways. Read the full article at

<http://www.itweb.co.za/sections/computing/2005/0503231130.asp?A=ITG&S=IT%20in%20Government&O=FPT>

Ireland Passes Law Banning English On Maps, Road Signs

Advocates of local languages won a small victory this month. Ireland recently enacted a law outlawing the use of English on road signs and official maps on much of the nation's western coast, where many people speak Gaelic. While locals admit that the decision will confuse foreigners in an area that

depends heavily on tourism, they say it's a price of patriotism. More than 2,300 towns, villages, fields and crossroads that previously had bilingual road signs will be switched to Irish only. The new law also says that the government-run Ordnance Survey mapping agency must use only Gaelic names in the affected areas. However, the law does not pertain to independent map producers. The initiative has placed a new focus on the battle to preserve Gaelic in Ireland. Read the full article at <http://www.nynewsday.com/news/nationworld/nation/sns-ap-ireland-gaelic,0,6918553.story?coll=nyc-nationhome-headlines>

UK Motorcyclists Feel At Risk On Congested Roadways

According to a new UK study, motorcyclists who ride for work purposes report feeling at risk on the country's congested roadways. Nine out of ten respondents felt at risk for a crash, with one in four complaining that a high volume of traffic can often obstruct their view and cause them to brake suddenly. The findings come a month after the UK government produced a new strategy focusing on motorcycle safety and the need for better training among riders.

UK To Keep Detailed Records Of Work-Related Crashes

The UK will now keep official records of work-related road crashes, thereby increasing the threat to companies of being prosecuted for crashes. Now, paperwork used by investigating police officers to log crash details will include a section on whether the driver involved was traveling on company business. Road safety experts have welcomed the move, as such figures were previously not available. It is the hope that these figures will be collated this year and be used to create a report outlining how many crashes involve at-work drivers.

Small Cars Could Help Alleviate Traffic

Fleet drivers choosing small cars could help alleviate the UK's growing congestion problem. A new study looking at the effect of driving small cars has found that small vehicles, such as the Smart ForTwo—a two-seater vehicle—could cut congestion by a third. Research showed that three Smart ForTwo vehicles could pass through a set of traffic lights in the same time as two average-size cars.

Study Examines Factors To Increase Seat Belt Use On Spanish Urban Roads

Seat belt use on Spain's roads is more than 80 percent, however on urban roadways this figure drops to approximately 50 percent. A new study uncovered how the perceptions of safety, discomfort, and social influence can predict seat belt use on urban roads. Among the results, concern about being fined for not using a seat belt did not predict seat belt use. In order to increase seat belt use on urban roads, the issue of discomfort needs be addressed. In addition, prevention campaigns should include information about the effectiveness of the seat belt in preventing and reducing injuries or deaths on urban roads. The results also highlight the importance of social influence for determining seat belt use and non-use and the potential roles social influence could play in increasing seat belt usage

Source: Accident Analysis and Prevention Authors: M. Cunill, M.E. Gras, M. Planes, C. Oliveras, M.J. Sullman